

RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES.

BY C. R.

THE history of the last fifty years in Russia reveals the fact that from an Eastern and despotic state, Russia is becoming more and more a European one. Her institutions are in process of being remolded into the likeness of foreign models. And yet this reaction in favor of liberal forms has by no means prevented the maintenance of genuine Russian customs, nor has it been continued without frequent interruptions by reason of reactions along nationalistic lines. The institutions of higher learning have been particularly subject to foreign influence from the fact that only a century before this period of change, at the founding of the first university in Moscow in 1755, the chairs in all the faculties had to be filled with foreign scholars, there being no native professors available. And although this foreign element was gradually removed as Russian university graduates became more numerous, yet in 1810 in the six universities then existing only one half of the professors were giving their lectures in the Russian tongue. This fact of the professors being unable to speak with fluency the language of their hearers led to a unique complication. The professors were restricted to three languages, German, French, and Latin, while the students were required to have taken a three years course in these languages before entering the university, the gymnasium being founded for this specific purpose, a preparatory school distinct from the lyceum.

However, an offset to this foreign element in the teaching had been the wholly Russian character of the administration of the universities at the time of their founding. A curator of military qualifications rather than academic experience was usually chosen by the Imperial Cabinet to have supervision of all university affairs, nomination of professors, choice of texts, even the very spirit and matter of the lectures delivered. Maxime Kovalevsky, formerly professor of law in Moscow, is authority for the statement that the chair of

philosophy in Kharkov University was given to a police officer by special request of the curator, and he adds, "No wonder if among the immediate reforms recommended by the professors was the breaking of the chain which fettered the progress of learning to the prejudice and gross ignorance of this sort of Russian pasha." The very flagrancy of these injustices against the Russian youth aroused several German professors in 1820 to resign in protest; only, however, to have their places filled by incompetent persons. Here, then, in the university body politic was a battle ground where strove the brutal powers of despotism with the vital forces of a new life intellectual, Western, potentially free.

Nicholas I in 1835 made large promise of appreciating the university situation and bringing redress. He named a committee to readjust matters between the government and the universities and occasionally participated in the work himself. After investigation the committee recommended the creation of a portfolio of Public Instruction in the Cabinet. The subsequent adoption of this plan by the Czar meant, after the manner peculiar in Russian cabinet control, merely the placing of one more irresponsible power over the university. Another measure of Nicholas I, the limitation of the number of university students by official decree, was part of a larger plan of his predecessor, Peter the Great, to control the numerical strength of the different classes into which he had divided society. This limitation came to mean in the university that only men were admitted who by their position were fitted to enter the Civil Service. Scholarship was a matter of indifference.

The cultivation of this Asiatic type of civilization in the university and without, continued till 1858. In that year the close of the Crimean War brought a rude and thorough awakening from Asiatic dreams. The Czar had not set up "a new Pan-Slavonic empire with his capital in Jerusalem," the Turk was still in Europe, while the standard of civilization in Western Europe was ever advancing. After these revelations and as a result of them came a time of large organic re-construction in Russia and the period of Western European imitation was commenced. By a statute of 1863 the university was remodeled after the German or French plan. Briefly outlined the administration was this: The council composed of the professors of all the faculties, had power to appoint to a chair any candidate who had been elected by the faculty to which he is to belong; twice chosen by these elective bodies he wants only the nomination on the part of the Minister of Public Instruction to enjoy all the privileges of his office. Moreover each faculty has the

right to elect its president or dean and altogether at a meeting of the council, and by ballot, a rector from among them. Subordinate officers and a disciplinary tribunal are equally at the nomination of the council. By the same statute the salaries of the professors were fixed independent of the students' fees, and the restriction of the number of students was removed. As to the different faculties, they were four in number as before, History and Philology, Natural Philosophy and Mathematics, Law, Medicine,—Theology still remained under the special charge of the Holy Synod. But the spirit of the instruction changed following Western methods in research. In Philosophy, Experimental Psychology, Comparative State Law, and Logic received greater attention, Economics were no longer excluded in the study of Law, and the value of the study of Natural Sciences was enhanced. The Theology taught to students in all faculties became less dogmatic in its opposition to the evidences of science and studies in comparative religion.

It will be seen that by this statute the university was almost independent of official interference. This freedom coming to the university after a century of repression changed it from a college of Government servants and gave it as great an attraction to the wealthy man of scientific interests as to the poor youth who felt that, under the new order, an education offered him opportunity for advancement. The result was a healthy mingling of all ranks of society and a breaking through the class distinctions of the preceding regime. Moral, social, and political problems were here treated in the light of every man's prejudices. Outside the lecture room the autonomy of the university was coming to mean that public thought was guided more by knowledge and scientific philosophy than by the biased utterances of the powers that were. For in a place like Moscow where there was no large influential body of courtiers and officials, a group of literary men and scientists belonging to an autonomous university faculty, became the center from which "the daily press, the monthly magazines, the clubs and the salons were pleased to borrow their leading opinions."

Unfortunately while this intellectual movement was gathering strength in the exercise of its freedom, and its influences were beginning to extend deeper down into Russian society, at the same time it was calling into play those opposition forces which soon embodied in the Slavophil or Old Russian party, were to be triumphant in the Czar's Cabinet. These Slavophiles held that progress should follow nationalistic, rather than Western lines. In serious minds it gave rise to a deep and conscientious study of national his-

tory, literature, and mythology, though in the frivolous it was mere rhetorical fervor.

On the other hand there were among the Slavophiles men like Pobedonotzeff who were attributing the death of Alexander II at an assassin's hand to the evil effects of the new scientific studies. And undoubtedly the extreme attitude of the students on certain political questions had given force to such a charge. For at this time when by every one acquainted with the industrial conditions, there was felt to be the greatest need for skilled Russian artisans, (and for this reason mainly the schools and universities were being more liberally equipped) these young college men and women, instead of qualifying for industrial life as supposed, were in reality dabbling in sociological problems and preparing to advocate gigantic reconstructions of Russian society. Naturally the government was alarmed and many moderate thinking men were coming to view with disfavor the leading ideas of the period of reform. This growing change in court sentiment did not, however, prevent the professors from continuing to express these same ideas openly in their lectures as occasion arose, and herein, Kovalevsky says, lay the reason why the reactionary party, triumphant in the cabinet, refused further to sanction the existence of university bodies outside the control of government censorship.

By 1884 the elective system was done away with, the council lost its power in all but name, the curator was again supreme regulating the attendance of the students at lectures, and scrutinizing the teaching of the professors. The more independent of the professors were forced to resign, while their colleagues, thinking that all theories were only good to bring them into trouble, carefully eliminated from their lectures anything but the statement of facts, and, "to calm the suspicions of the government, printed some innocent textbooks, the reading of which from the chair became thenceforth their chief occupation." Inevitably their classes were reduced; the professors were discredited in the eyes of the students.

Moreover, the new regulations hampered the students themselves as much as the professors, for the former were now forbidden by law to form societies or hold meetings to discuss college affairs. So it happened that the students, deprived of the guidance of their professors, their college interests quashed, turned with bitter zeal to the working out of their own theories and more than ever interested themselves in the people's problems. Soon a good understanding began to manifest itself between the students and certain of the lower

classes of Russian society. Such a union Russian bureaucracy beheld with alarm.

Accordingly, in the years following 1884 the government took still more severe measures of repression. Spies were placed everywhere in the different student communities. More and more the best interests of culture were overridden by officials who were endeavoring to get a grip on the situation by the use of mere blind force. In 1889 Pobedonotzeff, Minister of the Interior, organized a disciplinary battalion for the students from among the gendarmes. It was this resort to the police in preserving order in the universities that exasperated the students more than any preceding act of repression and finally resulted in the student riots.

The account of one of these struggles between the students and soldiers will serve to show their general character. Three or four years ago the St. Petersburg students at their anniversary meeting whistled at the entrance of one professor and applauded another—a thing likely to happen in any university. But the Dean sent for the police who brutally assailed the students as they left the building in a crowd, and refused to allow them to disperse until they broke through the ranks and fought their way along the streets of the city. Most of them succeeded in keeping together till they reached the Neva bridge, where the soldiers again attacked them riding among them and slashing mercilessly into the crowd with their lead-weighted whips. Nineteen of their number were killed in this wretched manner.

When the news of this butchery was received in other universities the men refused to attend lectures, and the university towns of Kieff, Kharkov, and Moscow were brought into a state of siege. Hundreds of arrests followed and a regulation was published announcing that a trial of those implicated in the disorders would be before a special committee of the ministers whose departments were concerned, the decisions of which committee were to be valid without any further imperial sanction. The affair was settled in this way. Military service for terms of two or three years in outlying military posts was the penalty in most cases; the men being removed secretly to their unknown destinations. Several refused to take the soldier's oath of allegiance to the Czar and were sentenced to death by court martial.

At this point an incident that had occurred on the night of the St. Petersburg disorders was to effect a short respite for the students. The Empress Dowager had passed in her carriage during a lull in the struggle on the Neva bridge, and the students gave her a hearty

cheer. This act of loyalty was a revelation to the Empress and so impressed her that she persuaded her son Nicholas II to try less harsh measures with these enthusiastic young subjects, the result being that Vannofsky, Minister of War, was entrusted with power to make full inquiry into their demands. The old soldier was fair in his views and generous in his dealings, winning the respect of the students. He encouraged them to discussion with him, he chose as his collaborators men in their esteem, and even gave permission to form student corporations. But here ended the "regime paternal" of Vannofsky.

The students immediately made use of their regained privilege of meeting to formulate demands for the restoration of their banished fellows. Vannofsky was estranged. He looked upon them no longer as his protégées but as impertinent schoolboys. Added to this aggressiveness on the part of the students, came the sudden withdrawal of the Czar's support, and Vannofsky, as much from panic as anger, closed his report with the recommendation of measures more severe than those of 1889. This brings the struggle to the years 1903 and 1904, and the question still was the unsolved one of the Czar's recourse to the military rule of the gendarmes in the university.

It would seem, that, if history were again to move on, some new element must presently enter into the situation, as had happened in the days of Alexander II before he undertook reform. The two periods are similar in some regards, for now as then the old ambitions for extensions to the East involved the Russian nation in a struggle there. Again the Russian armies returned home, broken, defeated, and as before the Czar's government, criticized and blamed on all hands, is humbled to the point of such deep self-searching as resulted in a willingness to undertake some measure at least of reform. But with the sounds of the half lawless pleadings of the downtrodden masses again making themselves heard above the failing sounds of war, and in this solemn moment of defeat, will not the Czar and his ministers search out the whole truth of demoralized Russia? "Not by bread alone," not by the mere machinery of freedom will the people's need be met and the nation's strength restored, "but by every word" of knowledge and enlightening truth from literature and science will the nation live. And so at this season we dare hope for the final unfettering of Russia's educational institutions and for a generous fostering of the intellectual resources of her people.